

Quarterly

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A CENTURY OF CALIFORNIA PRINTING

AS RELATED elsewhere in this issue, the first printing press to reach the west coast of America arrived at Monterey in June 1834. To commemorate the centenary of the beginning of Western printing, the Club will distribute to members on June 15th an interesting folder containing a reproduction of the only known portrait of the first operator of this press, Captain Agustin V. Zamorano. The likeness, a self-portrait made at Monterey between the years 1830-1836, shows Zamorano, then a man in his middle thirties, dressed in hunting costume

of the period, carrying a long rifle across his arm. An explanatory text relates the circumstances of the making of the portrait and traces the history of the original from Zamorano's time until its destruction by fire about 1905.

The reproduction of the portrait and the printing of the folder have been skilfully done by Johnck & Seeger, of San Francisco. It is felt that members will be interested in this souvenir of California's first printer, whose press reached Monterey a hundred years ago this month.



BIERCE AND THE POE HOAX

“ONE OF the rarest amusements of life is to go about with an icicle suspended by a string, letting it down the necks of the unwary . . .”

The above—it was written by Ambrose Bierce—is quoted by Carey McWilliams in the latter's introduction to “Bierce and the Poe Hoax,” which is scheduled to be the Club's next publication. That the icicles with which Bierce amused himself and his friends often took the form of what might be termed literary practical jokes has long been known. Half a dozen such hoaxes in which he was the moving spirit are recalled today. Curiously, the story of one of the most remarkable of his literary deceptions seems to have been completely forgotten. It was brought to light by the recent discovery of a group of the letters of the three men chiefly concerned: Bierce, Herman Scheffauer, and a young San Francisco newspaperman, Carroll Carrington. These letters unfold the complete story of one of the most daring and amusing of literary hoaxes: the attempt to put forth as the work of Edgar Allan Poe a long poem written by Bierce's young disciple, Herman Scheffauer.

How Bierce, from his retreat in the Los Gatos hills, directed the plot, how San Francisco newspaper readers of the late '90's greeted the appearance of the "newly discovered" Poe poem, the steps by which the conspirators kept interest alive, and the final denouement, are related in detail in Carroll D. Hall's story of the hoax—a story told largely in the words of the men who engineered the plot.

The book is now ready for the printer and the publication date will be announced soon. Mr. Hall's text will be supplemented by an interesting introduction by Carey McWilliams, author of a recent biography of Ambrose Bierce. The illustrations will include facsimile reproductions of Bierce and Scheffauer letters bearing on the hoax, a reproduction of the poem, and hitherto unpublished photographs of Bierce, Scheffauer, and Carrington.

The edition will probably be 250 copies and the price not more than \$3.00.

THE CALIFORNIA MINING TOWNS SERIES

ON MAY 15th, members received Part Seven of this series of early mining towns. Part Eight, Grass Valley in 1858, is being prepared by The Stanford University Press and will reach members soon after this issue of the News-Letter. Two other units are in active preparation. Part Nine (July), Angel's Camp, is being produced by The Ward Richie Press of Los Angeles, and Part Ten (August) will be Placerville, designed and printed by Thomas E. Williams, of the Department of Printing of Santa Ana Junior College.

Arrangements are going forward for the production of Parts Eleven and Twelve, the subjects of which will be

Columbia and Scott's Bar. Besides the twelve views of towns and camps it is planned to issue two additional folders, one to reproduce an early map of the gold fields, the other to consist of a title-page, a table of contents, and a short foreword. The series will end in December of this year. The first unit of a new group of twelve keepsakes—details of which will be given in the September News-Letter—will be distributed in January 1935.

That the interest and historical value of this mining towns series is recognized by members is indicated by the large number of orders received for slip-cases since these were offered on May 15th. Designed to contain and preserve the complete series, the cases sell for \$2.00 for all-cloth bindings and \$3.00 for those finished in half-leather.

Members are reminded that it is still possible to purchase duplicate sets at \$5.00; also that until further notice new members will be supplied on election with the parts already issued, thus assuring that they will receive the complete series.

¶ On the list of the Club's directors for the current year appear two new names, C. O. G. Miller and Allen L. Chickering. Although this is the first time either has served on the board, both are bookmen and collectors who have been consistent supporters of the Club's activities during the long period of their membership. The Club is fortunate in having the benefit of their experience and judgment in the direction of its affairs during the coming year.

¶ "Early Polynesian Printing," an important work on the first presses of the South Seas, with a census of their products, is among the publications scheduled to appear during 1934. First announced in September of last year, its appearance has been unavoidably delayed from month to month. It is hoped that a definite publication date can be set soon.

THE ORIGIN OF CALIFORNIA'S FIRST
PRINTING PRESS

by GEORGE L. HARDING

EDITOR'S NOTE: The fact that 1934 is the centenary of the beginning of printing in California lends added interest to this account of the solving of "one of the minor mysteries of California history." In clearing up the much-debated point of where California's first printer obtained his equipment, and of how and when it reached Monterey, Mr. Harding has made a valuable contribution to the history of the period. His narrative of the steps by which the theory was developed and of how evidence in its support was accumulated bit by bit until the story was complete makes interesting reading.

THOSE familiar with the beginning of printing on the Pacific Coast have long known that the first press on the mainland was that established by Agustin Vicente Zamorano at Monterey in 1834, on which were printed the broadsides, official forms and small books that are now, as the only printed works produced in Spanish California, the rarest and most valuable of California imprints.

By examination of these imprints, students have deduced much about the equipment of this first printing plant. However, the question of where the equipment came from and of how and when it arrived in California has never been definitely answered. Newspaper writers during Gold Rush days assumed that it had been sent up from Mexico and later historians and bibliographers have followed this theory, some of them stating it not as a theory but as a definite fact. The one writer who told a different story as to the origin of the equipment was Edward C. Kemble who, writing in the Sacramento *Union* in 1858, stated that not Mexico City but Boston had supplied the material, and that it had been brought to Zamorano by Captain Thomas Shaw, "a Boston merchant."

My own investigation of the subject gradually led me to the belief that Kemble's theory was correct; that the type was of American origin and that the equipment had actually been brought to California from Boston. The steps by which this theory has been proved may be of interest and I shall sketch them briefly.

First, it was essential that the origin of the type be definitely established. Very early, I grew convinced that the type was of American manufacture. Its design was typical of the products of American foundries of the period; there was no active typefoundry in Mexico during the first half of the 19th century; importation from Spain had ceased with Mexican independence in 1821, and Mexico was thereafter supplied by foundries in the United States. From type specimens in my collection, I satisfied myself that Zamorano's equipment did not, however, come from any of the old New York, Philadelphia or Baltimore foundries.

The search turned to Boston—with greater success. An examination of specimen books of the Boston Type and Stereotype Foundry for the years 1826 and 1845 (lent me by a friend in Boston) disclosed not only the body letter used by Zamorano but also nearly every variety of the ornaments in his collection, and a few wood engravings. This seemed conclusive, but to reinforce my own judgment, I had photostats made of Zamorano's imprints and submitted these, and the specimen books, to two thoroughly experienced San Francisco printers, Henry H. Taylor and Edwin Grabhorn. Each, independently, verified my findings; the type had unquestionably been cast by this Boston foundry.

This was an important step, but it was not proof that the equipment had come direct from Boston; it might

have come by way of Mexico. Kemble had stated that it was brought by Captain Shaw. Who was Shaw? On what ship had he sailed, and could her movements be traced? Having determined this, could it be proved that she had actually carried the historic equipment to Monterey? Investigation disclosed that Captain Thomas Shaw had once been an important figure in the Boston-Sandwich Island-California trade, and that he had sailed from San Diego for Boston on January 17, 1832, as supercargo of the ship *Pocahontas*. If Kemble's theory was correct, Shaw may on that trip have carried Zamorano's order for the printing press.

From its dated productions, it was known that the press was in use in California not later than July 28, 1834. But the attempt to follow the movements of Captain Shaw during the years from 1832 to 1834 was complicated by conflicting references to him in contemporary documents and accounts. The man had a way of appearing at widely separated points at virtually the same time. Two facts, however, were presently established: that Captain Thomas Shaw was supercargo of the ship *Lagoda* in the summer of 1834, and that the *Lagoda* was at Monterey Bay in June of that year—about the time the press must have been delivered.

All this bore out Kemble's story; but definite proof was still lacking. I then put the problem before Miss Adele Ogden, of Berkeley, who has made the maritime history of the Pacific Coast her particular field of research. From her I learned that there had been two Captain Shaws, Thomas and Vincent (which accounted for the conflicting references I had found), and she supplied me with a list of her notes on the movements of the *Lagoda*. These proved very valuable in filling in the story

of the *Lagoda*, but of even greater interest was a reference to an existing invoice of the ship—and for this particular voyage! It developed that one of the owners of the *Lagoda* was a then prominent New England merchant, James Hunniwell, and the Hunniwell Papers, a collection of his letters and accounts—including the all-important invoice—were preserved in the Harvard Library.

Several weeks later, I was examining a photostatic copy of this document, dated Boston, May 20, 1833; fourteen folio pages listing a miscellaneous cargo of merchandise typical of the “Boston ships” of the period; lumber, drygoods, men’s and women’s clothing, notions, harness, paint, crockery, tobacco, etc. Toward the foot of the eleventh page was the item that solved the mystery. For there in faded ink was the momentous entry: 1 case. Printing press, Type and Apparatus, complete.

There could no longer be any doubt about it; the good ship *Lagoda*, of Boston, had brought the first printing press to California.



¶ Since March 1, seventeen new members have been added to the roll of the Club. This is a healthy rate of increase, and one that the Membership Committee hopes to maintain through the remainder of 1934. This is easily possible—if members will continue their pleasant custom of proposing candidates and of submitting the names of prospects. Especially fervent thanks will be rendered for such co-operation during the normally quiet summer months that are just ahead.

¶ The editions of two Club publications, “The Santa Fe Trail to California” and William Blake’s “The Book of Thel,” have recently been sold out. Less than a dozen copies each remain of three other titles: “Philobiblon of Richard de Bury,” “The Gentle Cynic,” and “The Origin of the Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County.” Of the 25 publications still available, the supply of 9 numbers less than 25 copies each.

COLLECTORS' CLUBS AT THE STATE UNIVERSITY

by SAMUEL T. FARQUHAR
Manager, University of California Press

EDITOR'S NOTE: The growth of interest in book collecting in the West is evidenced by the formation during the past few years of a number of collectors' societies up and down the coast. From time to time, accounts of the activities of these groups of bibliophiles will appear in the News-Letter. Below is the story of two such clubs, recently organized at the University of California.

MEMBERS of The Book Club of California will be interested to know that two new clubs whose primary interest is in books have recently been started at the University of California. One is a student organization; the other is largely made up of faculty members, with a few non-academic Berkeley residents.

In September 1932, a group of students at the University organized the Book Arts Club for the purpose of studying the arts and crafts entering into the production of books. The Club meets fortnightly during the college year.

Among the avowed objectives of the Club when it was founded was that of publishing a book each year. The members proposed by this means to give concrete expression to the principles governing book design, which they had established by study and discussion. The first book to be published by the Club was an edition of the "Philobiblon of Richard de Bury." The Club members chose the text, planned the book, read the proof, and supervised its production from beginning to end. The actual printing and binding were done in the Printing Department of the University of California Press. It was wholly a student project. The edition consisted of 174

copies, of which 74 were for sale. It was little thought that there would be much demand for the book, but the Club's anticipation was pleasantly wrong. The sale copies were gone within two months after publication, and the venture proved successful. This year the Club is to publish "Presses of Northern California and Their Books, 1900-1933," a bibliography compiled and written by Louise Farrow Barr.

In October 1933, a few members of the faculty met at lunch one day to consider the possibility of forming a book collectors' club, and at a dinner meeting a few days later, at which eighteen were present, the project was launched. The Folio Club was adopted as a name; the origin of the title is to be found in the first book published by Edgar Allan Poe: "Tales of the Folio Club." The President is denominated First Folio, the Vice-President, Second Folio, the members Folios. A number of meetings have been held, the membership has increased, and interest seems unbounded.

The object of the Club is to bring together a group of men interested in books as collectable things without regard, necessarily, to the contents of the books. No dues and no initiation fees are charged. Dinner meetings are held once a month, except in June, July and August. It is proposed each year to sponsor a public lecture on some aspect of books or book collecting, and to hold a public exhibition of books.

¶ Among articles in prospect for future numbers of the News-Letter is an account of the interesting circumstances surrounding the founding of the Club, written by W. R. K. Young, one of the group responsible for its organization in 1912. Another attractive prospect is a paper on the literature of the Sierra Nevada by Francis P. Farquhar, authority on mountaineering in the West; still another is a prospective account of "California's First Library."

JOINT SALE OF BOOK CLUB PUBLICATIONS

THE FIRST cooperative venture in which the private book collectors' clubs of the country have engaged was launched on May 1 with the distribution to the members of six clubs of a catalogue in which each offered its publications to members of the other participating clubs. That this plan of making available to members of any of the clubs the publications of the others has proved interesting to collector-members is amply demonstrated by the response during the period since the sale opened.

Orders for our publications from members of the other five clubs have arrived in gratifying volume, and our own members in turn have availed themselves liberally of the opportunity to acquire examples of the books of these sister clubs. Through this exchange of book-buying privileges, collectors are enabled to own examples of finely printed editions produced in all parts of the country. This wider distribution of their publications is certain to prove beneficial to all the clubs by emphasizing the contribution of each toward the development of the arts of fine book production.

Members who have not yet availed themselves of this offer are reminded that the joint sale ends on June 30th. The participating clubs are: The Grolier Club, New York, The Club of Odd Volumes, Boston, The Caxton Club, Chicago, The Carteret Book Club, Newark, The Book Club of Texas, Dallas, and The Book Club of California, San Francisco. A few of the catalogues are still on hand and members who have lost or mislaid their copies will be furnished with duplicates as long as these are available.

REPORT ON THE ANNUAL MEETING

At the annual meeting of the Club, held on the evening of March 23, 1934, the following seven members, proposed by the Nominating Committee, were unanimously elected to serve on the Board of Directors for the year ending March 24, 1935: Alfred Sutro, E. V. Weller, Albert M. Bender, William C. Van Antwerp, Flodden W. Heron, C. O. G. Miller, Allen Chickering.

At their first meeting, members of the new board elected the following officers: President, Alfred Sutro; Vice-President, Flodden W. Heron; Treasurer, Albert M. Bender; Secretary, Oscar Lewis.

Subsequently, President Sutro announced the appointment of the following committees:

Publications: Albert M. Bender, Chairman; E. V. Weller, C. O. G. Miller

Membership: E. V. Weller, Chairman; Flodden W. Heron, Albert M. Bender

Entertainment: Flodden W. Heron, Chairman; William C. Van Antwerp, Allen Chickering

During informal discussion following the meeting, the problems and accomplishments of the past year were reviewed and plans for the future were considered. It was pointed out that, late in 1933, the decline in membership had stopped and that each month thereafter had shown a net gain in the number enrolled. This gain was attributed chiefly to new activities undertaken by the Club, and to the cooperation of members in persuading friends who were interested in these activities to join. The Club's two main objectives for the coming year were emphasized: to increase its usefulness to members by continuing and expanding present activities, and to restore the membership to its maximum of 500.